

Senza Sordino

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What a Long Strange Trip It's Been

By Brian Prechtl

This has been a terribly difficult summer for the Baltimore Symphony musicians—frankly, it has been a terribly difficult year. From the moment we arrived back in Baltimore following our triumphant tour to the UK and Ireland in September of 2018, we were caught in the shifting sands of the BSO's financial uncertainty. First, the management wasn't ready to negotiate on September 9. They then offered, and we turned down, a four-month extension, and we



Anna Sikes

decided to play and talk. Finally the true intentions of our leadership were revealed in its October 30 proposal to lop 12 weeks off of our 52-week season, and thereby reduce us to a 40-week orchestra, and to reduce our annual salary by 20% as well.

The next eight months were a roller-coaster affair, with a short temporary extension until January 15 and then an agreement to play and talk. At this point, the musicians agreed not to strike and BSO management agreed not to lock us out—until May 30 when the leadership suddenly decided that détente was no longer in its interest. With two weeks' notice, they abruptly cancelled the summer season and informed the musicians that we would be locked out on June 17. This decision was prompted by the failure of Maryland Governor Hogan to release \$1.6 million in funding that had been provided for in a bill that the musicians and the community had lobbied the Maryland General Assembly to pass. This funding would have helped support the remainder of the season, while a “work group” mandated by the same House Bill 1404 provided analysis of the BSO's finances and function.

Instead, we were out on the street. It was a long hot summer on the picket line. We thought we might maintain the picket for the first few weeks and then taper off while people went off to try to make some money in festivals and subbing with other orchestras, and indeed many of our players had no choice but to do that. But there was a contingent of warriors in our orchestra who were indomitable. They were there every day that we scheduled picketing, through sweltering heat and rainstorms. A sense of purpose grew in our ranks, and our unity was never in doubt. We were regularly joined by brothers

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Advancing Inclusion

By Weston Sprott and Shea Scruggs

Over the past year, orchestras have mobilized in significant ways to create pathways into the field for musicians of color. Orchestras, working together with funders, educational institutions, and professional organizations, have forged strong alliances to solidify pathways towards greater diversity. While these efforts to reach outward are crucial for advancing diversity, it is equally vital for orchestras to look inward at strengthening inclusion.



David Eliason

Musicians must lead this work. They are the gatekeepers to diversity and the tone-setters of inclusion. Many musicians underestimate their ability to advance inclusion. In our work with musicians and organizations, we have observed several creative ways musicians can take the lead towards creating more inclusive ensembles.



Courtesy of the author

Change The Job Postings (And Your Mindsets)

Most orchestral job postings are logistical and informational, containing nothing more than the organization name, job title, audition dates, and some contact information. While this approach helps managers efficiently disseminate information, it forgoes an opportunity for musicians to reflect on and communicate what they value.

Musicians should take ownership of this aspect of the hiring process, drafting organizational descriptions that inspire and attract. What qualities are you looking for in a new colleague, besides being an excellent musician? What is the musical and aesthetic philosophy of your ensemble? Musicians are more than cogs in a machine. Draft job descriptions that reflect the vitality and dynamism that musicians bring to the stage every night.

Inclusion starts before the audition. A sparse and logistical posting gives the message that musicians in this orchestra are chosen to play, not to think or engage. This inadvertent message is a barrier to inclusion hiding in plain sight, and it limits how musicians perceive their ability to connect with colleagues,

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Chairperson's Report

By Meredith Snow

Taking Action

With the madness going on in our federal government, it is hard to know as a private citizen what to do or where to turn. Do we watch every twist and contortion of the infinitesimally slow train wreck happening in Washington DC? Or should we ignore it and go about our business?



Diane Amernic Photography

At this moment in time, amidst the upheaval and confusion, I think it is incumbent upon each of us to speak up, act up, and participate in the governance of our country, our city, and our workplace. Whatever your political bent, the time to act is now. If we do not speak up through the channels available to us, we are simply complicit in the demise of our society.

Grassroots organizing—canvassing for a political candidate, standing on the street corner holding a sign, contacting your representatives in Congress—are all avenues available to us every day.

What the musicians of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra accomplished in securing \$3.2 million in funding from the Maryland General Assembly is nothing short of remarkable. Their grassroots organizing—by musician, by citizen, by patron, by donor—resulted in a major shift of awareness and support in the city of Baltimore and in surrounding communities. By first organizing themselves, then reaching out to the closest circle of supporters and so on, they circumvented the seemingly monolithic obstacle of their management and reached all the way to the Governor of the State of Maryland. They have given us a living example of what can be accomplished through initiative and daily effort. Their activism in this fight has been extraordinary, and this kind of activism is available to us all.

Just as it is the responsibility of every citizen of the United States to participate in our democracy, it is the responsibility of every musician to be an active participant in the governance of their orchestra. The lines of communication require constant maintenance and attention at every level—musician to musician and musician to management. In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, “Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world ... Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.” Even with a ratified contract in Baltimore, the work continues. There are relationships to be amended and repaired, and contract improvements to be secured. The struggle for fair pay and a representative voice never stops. Unless we as individuals take responsibility for exercising our representative voice, justice will elude us and there will be no democracy.

Idle complacency will be the demise of any organization.

As of publication time, ICSOM will have launched, or be launching imminently, our email campaign in support of S.2254, the Butch Lewis Act. This bill would provide low-interest gov- ➤



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ernment loans to multi-employer pension plans in critical and declining status, so the plans can avoid benefit reductions. As the bill stands now, our American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund (AFM-EPF), now critical and declining, would be eligible to apply. It is imperative that every one of us—every ICSOM musician, every musician in our fellow Player Conferences (ROPA, TMA, and RMA), and every AFM member—respond to this call. I would ask that even those musicians who are not participants in the AFM-EPF contact their Senators and express their support for this bill. Millions of Americans across the country are enrolled in multi-employer plans that are in, or near, critical and declining status. We will have an economic crisis of epidemic proportions if the federal government sits on its hands and does nothing to address this situation. We must speak up in support of S.2254 for our own pension as well as that of others.

Moreover, these multi-employer pension funds are **union** plans, negotiated by private-sector unions and employers. Resistance to this bill is surely informed, at least in part, by ideological opposition to unions themselves. The failure of these plans would be just one more setback for the union movement. We who believe in that movement should feel impelled to support this bill for that reason alone.

Since its founding in 1962, ICSOM has been an advocate for orchestral musicians—with our managements, within the AFM, and on the national stage. But like any democratic organization, its strength and efficacy are dependent on its membership. We need every voice to take an active role in order for ICSOM to be heard, just as our federal government needs your participation to govern for the good and welfare of all our citizens. 

President's Report

By Paul Austin

The Sky is Falling. Really?

This past year, ICSOM Chairperson Meredith Snow and I coauthored articles and worked together in establishing relationships with important media contacts. In advance of ICSOM's annual conference in August,



we spoke about our upcoming event with two local journalists: a reporter from a Salt Lake City newspaper and a Utah arts critic.

While their articles were published just a few hours apart, they could not have been more different. The heading of the first article, "We Are Losing Orchestras," was in vast contrast to the second article's basic title, "Symphony Central."

Note that the title of the first article has since been updated to read

"How a Conference in Utah Could Help Save the Symphony World." Over the top, perhaps, but an improvement.

However, when a British blogger picked up the first story, he added a leading statement that was even more sensationalist: ICSOM was holding a "crisis meeting" in Utah. This was in

stark contrast to the second story's mostly accurate opening statement, which reported on "the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians' annual conference."

News flash: a scheduled annual conference is not a crisis meeting.

ICSOM immediately notified the blogger to provide correct information. While we had hoped for a retraction, or even a follow-up article, the best we received was the placement of our statement (provided below) as an update provided underneath the post.

The 2019 ICSOM conference is not a "crisis meeting." Rather, it is our 57th annual conference. We've been holding it every year since 1963, in good times and bad. While there is always discussion at the conference regarding the challenges facing our orchestras, we firmly reject the notion that there is a "crisis" among ICSOM orchestras; to the contrary, despite a small number of workplace disputes over the past year, the vast majority of ICSOM orchestras are alive, well, and thriving.

In fact, the majority of ICSOM orchestras who recently bargained successor agreements have settled with progressive, non-concessionary contracts. This includes the Atlanta Symphony, Columbus Symphony, the Florida Orchestra, Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, Hawai'i Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, MET Opera Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony, Nashville Symphony, New York City Ballet Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Oregon Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Utah Symphony, and Virginia Symphony.

Similarly, the quote "we are losing orchestras" was taken entirely out of context. In the interview with *Deseret News*, that statement was made in the course of discussing economic crises in 2003 and 2008, in which some orchestras indeed faced difficulties. That is simply no longer the case. Orchestras, like other arts organizations, will always require the support of patrons. But the arts in America are an economic engine: according to Americans for the Arts, the nonprofit arts and culture industries generated \$166.3 billion in total economic activity and supported 4.6 million jobs in 2015. Creative solutions to the economic challenges that face orchestras are evident in the hundreds of cities across America that support orchestras of every budget size. ICSOM sees a bright future for symphonic music, and for ICSOM orchestras in particular.

Is the answer never to speak to a reporter again? Or to avoid bloggers altogether? Hardly. But it is understood that news of a falling sky will attract more attention than a report about a sunny one.

Let's be clear about this. It is a fact that an overwhelming majority of ICSOM orchestras whose collective bargaining agreements expired in the past two years have settled with progressive contracts.


Of ICSOM's 52 member orchestras, 30 had contract negotiations for successor agreements since October 2017. Of the 30, 27 of them ended up with a positive outcome. (For those counting up the names in our response above, the other orchestras who belong on this list include the Cleveland Or- ➤

chestra, Houston Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Symphoria.) Not concessionary. Zero crisis. Good news. Clear skies.

Let's not ignore the struggle of three ICSOM orchestras and their musicians, however. The Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra had a six-day strike in October 2018, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra had a seven-week strike last spring, the longest in CSO history. Today the musicians of the Baltimore Symphony continue to fight in order to preserve their jobs. (*Note: As of September 23, there is a contract agreement in Baltimore. See "What a Long Strange Trip It's Been" on page 1.*)

Let's do the math. Ten percent of recently-negotiating ICSOM orchestras experienced serious labor action. Ninety percent of ICSOM orchestras in recent negotiations experienced non-concessionary bargaining.

And it isn't just at the bargaining table where most ICSOM orchestras are not in crisis. The San Francisco Symphony's gala in early September was their most successful fundraising event ever, raising more money for their programs and education than their recent centenary celebration. The Alabama Symphony Orchestra announced that September's Maestro's Ball, their largest annual fundraising event, was record-breaking, allowing them to continue their community outreach program Changing Lives Through Music. In August, owners of the Cleveland Browns made a major donation to the city's music programs, including \$1 million to the Cleveland Orchestra. By next summer, the venue for the San Diego Symphony's annual outdoor concert series will be a permanent, ultramodern structure, a \$45 million project (*Note: See "San Diego's New Summer Venue" on page 10*). In August, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra announced that they received an \$80,000 grant to hold sensory-friendly concerts. And the Philadelphia Orchestra received the largest gift in its history, a record-breaking \$55 million, of which \$50 million will go into the orchestra's endowment and \$5 million will go into general operating costs. Bravo to these organizations, plus others who have achieved recent financial success!

ICSOM delegates recently voted on the location of our next three annual conventions: Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, and Grand Rapids. At this time, all of them will be in August and none are planned to be crisis meetings. 

Conference Report

By Laura Ross

The 57th ICSOM conference was held from August 20–24, 2019, in Park City, Utah, not far from Deer Valley, where the Utah Symphony performs during the summer months. The conference—hosted by the musicians of the Utah Symphony, Local 104, and conference coordinator Julie Edwards—provided a respite from the August heat where delegates, local officers, and



guests dealt with a jam-packed three-and-a-half days of presentations, open forums, and opportunities to meet with their colleagues from around the country. As busy as the schedule was, the delegates were offered multiple opportunities during breakouts and Town Hall meetings throughout the conference to hold open dialog with other delegates and the ICSOM Governing Board.

For many years, ICSOM President and Counsel have held a negotiating orchestras workshop on Tuesday evening, but for this conference, a negotiation presentation was instead included in the regular conference schedule. Another Tuesday event—a volunteer event in the host's community—was scrubbed since Park City is a resort area and transportation issues interfered with scheduling an event this year. We hope it will continue in future years in other host cities.

Before the conference begins, and for more than 15 years now, the Governing Board has invited new delegates to a breakfast to help prepare them for the vast amount of information they are about to absorb. Delegates are the voices of their orchestras, but the conferences are not just about meeting other orchestra members—there's not a lot of time to rest or sightsee. ICSOM conferences offer delegates the opportunity to meet and hear from the leadership of the AFM and Symphonic Services Division, to hear status updates about the American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund, to learn about labor law, orchestra committee responsibilities, and insights into bargaining, and to discuss important issues of concern to our members around the country.

Following brief introductions and the first roll call of orchestras, there was a moment of silence to honor our friend and colleague, former Grant Park Orchestra ICSOM Delegate Dale Newton, who died suddenly a few weeks after the 2018 Conference.

Utah Symphony ICSOM Delegate Joel Gibbs, Local 104 President Michael Palumbo, Summit County (where Park City is located) Council Chair Roger Armstrong, Utah Symphony|Utah Opera Vice President and Chief Operating Officer David Green, and Utah Symphony|Utah Opera Lifetime Board Member Patricia Richards welcomed delegates and guests to the conference.

In her address to the conference, ICSOM Chairperson Meredith Snow (Los Angeles Philharmonic) called for our boards and managers to recognize their civic duty in supporting our orchestras in their service to our communities. "If we cannot learn to work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, in a shared vision of our future, our orchestras are not going to survive." She said that we need to work together as equal partners—a triumvirate of powerful entities existing in relation to each other, creating a single organization in common cause. ICSOM President Paul Austin (Grand Rapids Symphony) used his address to share information about numerous positive ICSOM settlements, the Chicago Lyric and Chicago Symphony strikes, the Baltimore Symphony lockout, and two successful Calls to Action, along with numerous updates to ICSOM's website and social media.

Following officer reports and officer nominations, delegates viewed videos about the history of Local 104, the Haitian Orchestra Institute founded by Utah Symphony members Yuki MacQueen and John Eckstein, a new work *Transcend* that >

was commissioned to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and audience commentary following a concert for the Hispanic community in Salt Lake City and the surrounding areas. Former ICSOM President George Brown, principal timpanist of the Utah Symphony, serves on the Diversity Task Force that includes management and musician representation along with the Mexican Consulate and staff.

Wednesday afternoon included a new installment of Orchestra Projects of Note. This year, Michael Sutton spoke about the Minnesota Orchestra's South Africa Tour where they participated in the celebration of Nelson Mandela's 100th birthday; Zach Galatis talked about the collaborative work



Michael Sutton

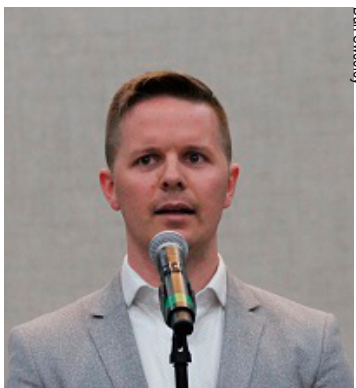


Leelanee Sterrett

involved between songwriters and mothers through the Oregon Symphony's Lullaby Project; Leelanee Sterrett described the New York Philharmonic's celebration of New York City's roots *New York Stories: Threads of our City*, featuring the world premiere of Julia Wolfe's multimedia *Fire in my mouth*, about the lives lost in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire; Jordan Schifino explained that the Hawai'i Symphony's *Symphony of Hawaiian Birds*

was written by six different composers to celebrate activities protecting the Hawaiian Islands' ecosystem; Rebecca Gilmore Phillips presented the Virginia Symphony musicians' video interviews, which were produced to introduce the musicians to the five-city region of Hampton Roads that the orchestra serves; and Micah Howard outlined the Pittsburgh Symphony musicians' activities raising funds, performing, and loading and delivering food for 412 Food Rescue.

Dr. Heather Malyuk, an audiologist with Soundcheck, spoke briefly about 3D-ME, a new hearing protection aid that she later offered for individual demonstrations. She thanked the National Symphony for their assistance during the development and testing process. ICSOM Counsel Kevin Case closed day one with a review of the past year's negotiations and outcomes, which included the Chicago Symphony and Lyric Opera of Chicago strikes and the Balti-



Chicago Symphony Delegate Miles Maner briefly discussed the orchestra's recent strike

more Symphony Orchestra lockout. The Mixer that evening, hosted by Local 104, was held on the patio of the Sheraton Park City Hotel and featured a small jazz ensemble. Delegates and guests enjoyed the temperate mountain weather and some toasted marshmallows at the fire pit for s'mores.

Thursday morning's reports included one by ICSOM's third AFM delegate, Member-at-Large Dan Sweeley (Buffalo Philharmonic), on the recent AFM Convention, and an explanation of the key changes to the newly ratified Integrated Media Agreement by ICSOM Electronic Media Committee Chair Brian Rood (Kansas City Symphony) and SSD Electronic Media Director Debbie Newmark. Following the AFM Symphony-Opera Strike Fund report, Paul Austin was appointed as trustee, replacing previous trustee ICSOM President David Angus upon his retirement from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.



Player Conference panel: Meredith Snow (ICSOM chairperson), John Michael Smith (ROPA president), Robert Fraser (OCSM president), Heather Boehm (TMA vice-president), and Marc Sazer (RMA president)

Following a panel discussion by Player Conference Council representatives, AFM President Ray Hair addressed the conference. In the afternoon, Local 30-73 President Brad Eggen, the recently appointed AFM-EPF Retiree Representative, was joined by two members of his Equitable Factors Panel, ICSOM Chairman Emeritus Brad Buckley (Saint Louis Symphony, retired, and current Secretary-Treasurer of Local 444) and Mike Merritt (a member of Local 47 and former member of the onstage band for Conan O'Brien). Attorneys Pete Rosene and Pamela Nissen, who have been engaged by Eggen, also attended to assist in the presentation about Eggen's role as Retiree Rep, and to answer questions.



Brad Eggen

SSD Director Rochelle Skolnick's presentation about orchestra committees and their duty of fair representation (DFR) obligations rounded out the afternoon. Before dispersing for dinner, President Paul Austin and Secretary Laura Ross (Nashville Symphony) were reelected by acclamation. That evening the first Town Hall meeting, which is a closed session for delegates and the ICSOM Governing Board, was held.

Following elections on Friday, in which Keith Carrick (Utah Symphony) and Micah Howard were elected to two-year terms as Members at Large, Lovie Smith-Wright gave a brief AFM Diversity Committee report, and Kevin Case discussed the structure and funds of internal orchestra players associations and answered questions. This was followed by two presentations that continued our diversity discussion of previous conferences: Dr. Karen Yair (League of American Orchestras) shared information about the League's Catalyst Fund that is assisting applicant orchestras as they address internal diversity issues, and Alberto Suarez (Kansas City Symphony) and Caen Thomason-Redus (Detroit Symphony administration) discussed the approaches their orchestras have been taking. The second discussion entitled "Meritocracy Myth" was a lengthy discussion and Q&A led by Weston Sprott (Metropolitan Opera), Alex Laing (Phoenix Symphony), and strategic



Alex Laing, Weston Sprott, Shea Scruggs

consultant Shea Scruggs, that covered auditions, tenure, the use of screens, the role of music directors, and other issues. (Note: See "Advancing Inclusion" on page 1.)

The final day of the conference began with a moderated panel discussion addressing how orchestras maintain internal unity and engagement. Greg Mulligan (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra), Kimberly Tichenor (Louisville Orchestra), Micah Howard, and ICSOM Media Consultant Randy Whatley shared various stories and observations about their efforts during and following work stoppages. Delegates



Randy Whatley and Micah Howard

chose the Pittsburgh Symphony to host the conference in 2020 [dates will be August 19–22, 2020], and the Grand Rapids Symphony will host the 2022 conference, which will be the 60th anniversary of ICSOM; the Milwaukee Symphony was previously chosen to host the conference in 2021. The final business of the conference was to discuss and adopt resolutions, which can be found on page 8.

Note: the author is ICSOM secretary.

Antipodean Advocacy

By Bruce Ridge

I have long felt a kinship with the musicians of Australia's orchestras. I first met the leadership of the Symphony Orchestra Musicians Association of Australia (SOMA), when soon-to-be-president Tania Hardy-Smith vis-



The author in front of the Sydney Opera House

ited the ICSOM Conference in San Diego in 2005. Out of that first meeting grew a long friendship that would flourish through multiple international orchestra conferences in Berlin, Oslo, and Amsterdam, where I met more of the leadership of SOMA and their union, the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA). It was an honor to welcome the current president of SOMA, Mark Bruwel of the Opera Australia Orchestra, at the 2016 ICSOM Conference in Washington, DC. For many years we had discussed finding an opportunity for me to visit with the musicians of Australia. So when Mark invited me to be the keynote speaker at the SOMA Conference in Sydney this August, I was thrilled beyond expression.

About 45 years ago, when I was growing up on the Outer Banks of North Carolina (at the time so remote that there were signs in the cottages with instructions for television reception that read "TV channels: 3, 10, and 13...weather permitting"), I remember watching a broadcast from the newly-opened Sydney Opera House on a blurry black and white TV set. I don't recall just what event was being broadcast internationally, but I could see the beautiful building, and it became emblazoned in my memory. To attend a spectacular presentation of *Madama Butterfly* in that same opera house was an emotional experience for me.

The beauty of the Opera House, shimmering in the sun as it sits on Bennelong Point on Sydney Harbour, is nothing short of breathtaking. (As Bill Bryson noted in his book *In a Sunburned Country*, life cannot offer many places finer to stand than Circular Quay in Sydney.) The building is one of the most famous structures in the world, but standing by the harbor it seems even larger than what can be imagined from photographs. I've been told that seven A380 airplanes could sit wing-to-wing on the site. More than ten million people visit the Opera House every year for hourly tours and to attend events at the venue's multiple performance spaces.

The meeting of SOMA was held at Rushcutters Bay in Sydney, and was attended by representatives from the orches- ➤

tras of Adelaide, Melbourne, New Zealand, Opera Australia, Queensland, Sydney, Tasmania, Victoria, West Australia (Perth), and the Australian Ballet, as well as the leadership of MEAA. Each orchestra had approximately five members in attendance. The theme of the conference was advocacy, and I participated in a panel discussion with Emma Dunch, the CEO of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, titled *Advocating our Art*. There is an ongoing need in Australia, as everywhere, for musicians to continue to be their own strongest advocates. In Australia, there is considerable governmental funding for orchestras and the arts, but the amount of support varies from orchestra to orchestra.

SOMA consists of approximately 550 members from eight orchestras, and was in some ways modeled after ICSOM at its founding. Nearly 100% of the musicians in its orchestras are members of SOMA, and the organization serves its members in many ways, including communication and advocacy, as well as through the production of its excellent magazine *Senza Sord*.

A survey conducted by MEAA this summer found that there is strong support for public funding of orchestras in Australia, with 83% of people saying funding should either stay at current levels or be significantly increased. 48% of respondents identified orchestral music as an important part of Australia's culture, and 70% agreed that orchestras are an important part of the economy. Over 50% expressed that it is important for school children to learn classical music. But regrettably, the survey also found that a majority of Australians did not attend a live entertainment event in the last 12 months.

In my keynote address to the conference, I expressed that in a time of incivility, our music remains more relevant than ever, and in our troubled world, humanity will always persevere in the face of violence. Music will forever be a response to hatred. Musicians can lead the way by continuing to offer an elevated message of hope. In doing so, the world will surely benefit, as will musicians everywhere. Musicians always must stand for peace, and we must take action with our art to bring compassion to those who are hungry, alone, suffering, and discriminated against.

I arrived in Sydney just days after two mass shootings in America. It wasn't a subject I felt I could avoid, having been offered this international forum to discuss the importance of music to society. In the inevitable hand-wringing that always follows such gun-related incidents, pundits speculate on how we might respond. To me it seems clear one element of the problem is that in certain areas of America it is easier for a child to get a gun than a trumpet, and in many neighborhoods children grow up with a greater familiarity with the sound of gunfire than with the sound of an orchestra. We must invest in the early years of a child's life, as no education is complete without music. By bringing music and hope to the lives of young people, we not only are working to create a new generation of audiences, we

are also helping to create socially aware citizens of the world who may be able to lead the world to a greater understanding, and a new era of peace.

The conference featured several tributes to Richard Gill, a beloved music educator and conductor who passed away last year. He was a strong advocate of music education for children, and I was moved by the many recollections of his work and kindness offered by musicians from across the continent.

Throughout my visit the kindness and compassion of the Australian people impressed me everywhere I went. A presentation at the conference by Support Act expressed that sense of compassion. Support Act, as described on the website, is "a charity, unique in Australia, helping artists and music workers who are facing hardship due to illness, injury or some other crisis that impacts on their ability to work in music." Among the many services for musicians who may be in need is a 24-hour free and confidential helpline. Such a program could be of value in every country. The message from the vision statement expresses, "We are service driven. We act with dignity and integrity. We care for our community. We foster positive relationships. We believe in continual improvement. We will always deliver help without judgment and with compassion, working to the highest possible professional standards. We will embrace and drive change, be nimble in our approach and we will surpass expectations."

Another example of the compassion of musicians in Australia is the Concert for Life, an event that marks World Suicide

Prevention day, organized by members of the Sydney Symphony and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. This year's event, as reported in *Limelight* magazine (a beautiful nationwide publication that serves as Australia's classical music and arts magazine), will raise funds for Indigenous suicide prevention.


Efforts are being made throughout Australia to recognize and honor the Aboriginal people, and many buildings have signs that acknowledge that the site actually belongs to a particular Aboriginal group. In some areas of the nation an "acknowledgment of Country" can be made, with wording along the lines of "I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging." In Sydney, events such as the SOMA conference now begin with a "Welcome to Country" led by a recognized elder of the welcoming group.

I was also fortunate to attend a concert of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, led by Music Director David Robertson, at Town Hall in Sydney, a beautiful building which opened in 1889. (The orchestra will perform there next season, when renovations begin on the concert hall at the Sydney Opera House.) It was an impressive performance in a beautiful setting, and I consider myself the luckiest musician in the world to have had an opportunity to hear so many of the world's great orchestras in my travels for ICSOM and for >>



Mark Bruwel and the author

arts advocacy. I hope I will find more opportunities to take a positive message across the world, and that I might continue to build friendships with musicians on multiple continents.

I want to offer my thanks to my great friend Mark Bruwel and all the musicians of SOMA as well as the leadership of MEAA for this invitation. I also want to thank Meredith Snow and the ICSOM Governing Board for their support. It means a great deal to me that I still have opportunities to spread ICSOM's message of hope and advocacy through my travels. 

Note: The author is a former ICSOM chairperson. His keynote address to the conference of the Symphony Orchestra Musicians Association of Australia can be read at <https://www.meaa.org/news/the-healing-power-of-music/>.

Adopted Resolutions of the 2019 Conference

All resolutions were submitted by the ICSOM Governing Board and adopted by unanimous consent

Support for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Musicians

Whereas, The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) has been a cultural icon for over a century, serving its community through good times and bad; and

Whereas, The BSO is one of our great American orchestras, the only ICSOM orchestra originally formed as a branch of a municipal government, performing educational concerts since the 1920's; and

Whereas, Since 2002, the musicians of the orchestra have agreed to seven concessionary contracts, and the total amount spent on musicians in that time has grown about 0.4% per year on average, from \$10.6 million to \$11.2 million; and

Whereas, In the course of bargaining since September 2018, the BSO management has made and maintained onerous proposals, including proposals that would cut 12 weeks from the season and 20% from the musicians' annual compensation; and

Whereas, The BSO musicians spearheaded an effort, along with former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley and former board member Greg Tucker, that secured an appropriation of \$3.2 million over two years from the Maryland General Assembly; and

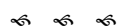
Whereas, Despite this legislation, the BSO management canceled the recently announced 2019 summer season and shortly thereafter locked out the musicians; and

Whereas, Governor Larry Hogan has not yet released the funds appropriated by the General Assembly; and

Whereas, The BSO musicians have now been locked out for ten weeks; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Officers and Delegates to the 2019 ICSOM Conference call on the board and management of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra to fulfill their duty as custodians of the orchestra for the citizens of Baltimore, the state of Maryland, and this country by ending the destructive lockout and bargaining in good faith to reach a fair contract agreement with the musicians of the orchestra; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Officers and Delegates to the 2019 ICSOM Conference call on Maryland Governor Hogan to immediately release the funds for the BSO appropriated by the Maryland General Assembly.



Support the Butch Lewis Act

Whereas, The International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM) represents nearly 4,000 orchestral musicians from the top 52 orchestras in the United States and Puerto Rico; and

Whereas, More than 200 multi-employer pension plans across the country are in financial jeopardy, threatening the retirement benefits of millions of Americans; and

Whereas, The American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund (AFM-EPF) multi-employer pension plan has entered critical and declining status as of this year; and

Whereas, The vast majority of ICSOM musicians are relying on the AFM-EPF for economic security in their retirement; and

Whereas, House Resolution 397, the Butch Lewis Act, was passed by the House of Representatives in June of 2019 and introduced in the Senate as S. 2254 in July of 2019; and

Whereas, The Butch Lewis Act would establish a trust fund to make loans to certain multi-employer pension plans such as the AFM-EPF, thereby securing the previously earned retirement benefits of ICSOM musicians, the approximately 55,000 participants in the AFM-EPF, and millions of other hardworking Americans; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Officers and Delegates to the 2019 ICSOM Conference urge the United States Senate to pass S. 2254.



David Angus

Whereas, David Angus joined the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra as third horn in 1973; and

Whereas, He represented his orchestra colleagues on the orchestra committee, negotiating committee, and as ICSOM Delegate for the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra from 1977-96 and again from 2002-13, for a total of 30 years of service; and

Whereas, Since 1994 David Angus has served as president, and currently serves as both president and secretary-treasurer, of the Rochester Musicians' Association Local 66; and

Whereas, He served on the ICSOM Governing Board as Eastern Orchestras Regional Vice-Chair from 1978-83, as Member at Large from 1988-90, and from 1990-2002 as ICSOM President; and

Whereas, Since 1992 he has served as a valued advisor and Trustee for the AFM Symphony-Opera Strike Fund; and

Whereas, After 46 years, David Angus is retiring as a member of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Officers and Delegates to the 2019 ICSOM Conference express their immense respect, admiration, and gratitude to ICSOM President Emeritus David Angus for his decades of service on behalf of musicians in Rochester, other ICSOM orchestras, and orchestras across the US and Canada, and offer their best wishes in all his future endeavors.



Matthew Comerford

Whereas, Matthew Comerford, assistant principal trumpet of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, admirably served multiple terms as a member of the orchestra committee and negotiated six contracts during his tenure; and

Whereas, He represented his orchestra as ICSOM delegate from 2004-18, and during that time he was elected as ICSOM Member at Large in 2008, a position he held until 2015; and

Whereas, Matthew Comerford served as an outstanding representative for the pit orchestra musicians in opera and ballet orchestras in ICSOM; and

Whereas, He served as a member of the ICSOM Electronic Media Committee from 2004-19, as Co-chair and then, from 2013-15, as Chair; and

Whereas, Matthew Comerford recently retired after 32 seasons with the Lyric Opera of Chicago; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Officers and Delegates to the 2019 ICSOM Conference extend their thanks and respect to Matthew Comerford for his devotion to orchestra musicians and recording orchestras across the country, and offer him best wishes for a rewarding retirement and many holes-in-one in his future.

Brian Rood

Whereas, Brian Rood has been a member of the Kansas City Symphony since 1995, where he has been an outstanding leader in his orchestra; and

Whereas, After leading his orchestra in achieving union recognition, negotiating the orchestra's first collective bargaining agreement, and joining ICSOM, his ICSOM activities increased when he was elected to serve as ICSOM President from >>

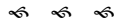


2002-05 and then again from 2006-15; and

Whereas, Brian Rood has served as Trustee to the AFM Symphony-Opera Strike Fund and AFM Trustee for the American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund; and

Whereas, He is stepping down from his position as Chair of the ICSOM Electronic Media Committee, a position he has held since 2015, and where he served as a key musician representative during the recently-ratified Integrated Media Agreement (IMA) negotiations; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Officers and Delegates to the 2019 ICSOM Conference offer their thanks and gratitude to ICSOM President Emeritus Brian Rood for the energy, expertise, compassion, and devotion he continues to display on behalf of orchestra musicians throughout the US and Canada, and hope that he will continue to offer his services and influence for the benefit of the orchestral field in the future.



Kimberly Tichenor

Whereas, Kimberly Tichenor joined the Louisville Orchestra's second violin section in 2000, and in 2010 she moved into a leadership position as assistant principal second violin; and



Whereas, For most of her tenure with the orchestra she has served on Louisville Orchestra's orchestra committee and negotiated many contracts; and


Whereas, In tandem with Co-Chair Clara Markham, she was instrumental in leading her Louisville Orchestra colleagues through the orchestra's bankruptcy filing and subsequent lockout of the musicians; and

Whereas, Kimberly Tichenor has attended ICSOM conferences as an observer in 2010, as Alternate ICSOM Delegate in 2013 and 2016, and as the Louisville Orchestra ICSOM Delegate at the

2012, 2014, and 2017 conferences; and

Whereas, In 2016 she was elected and has served as Member at Large (MAL) for the past three years; and

Whereas, Kimberly Tichenor has decided to step down as MAL to concentrate on the upcoming negotiations for the Louisville Orchestra; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Officers and Delegates to the 2019 ICSOM Conference offer their thanks and respect to Kimberly Tichenor for her service, advocacy, and devotion to her orchestra and to the thousands of members of ICSOM orchestras across the country, and wish her all the best as she continues to proactively serve her colleagues and the Louisville community in the future. 

Newslets

Reaching Completion in Washington

It was an eventful September at the Kennedy Center, beginning with the conclusion of the National Symphony Orchestra negotiations. The four-year agreement, ratified by musicians on September 11, includes an overall increase in base wages of 8.5% as well as implementing a new employer contribution of 1.5% to their 403(b) retirement plan.

The NSO negotiations finished just as the Kennedy Center's first-ever expansion, named the REACH (for renew, experience, activate, create, and honor), publicly opened with a 16-day "Creativity in Action" Festival. For the project, the Kennedy Center had chosen Columbia University Professor Steven Holl as the architect. (Note: See "Orchestra Newslets" in the March 2015 issue.) Holl's previous works include Houston's Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas's Stretto House, and the University of Minnesota's Ralph Rapson Hall. The finished REACH includes three indoor pavilions, an outdoor stage with a video wall, 130,000 square feet of landscaping and gardens, a cafe,

and a pedestrian bridge that connects the Center with a path to the National Mall and monuments.

The Opening Festival saw performances, presentations, workshops, displays, and other contributions from a wide variety of art forms, including chamber music, jazz, comedy, theater, dance, hip hop, electronica/DJ culture, indigenous cultures, film, and visual arts. Some notable participants included Mason Bates, Tiler Peck, the Kronos Quartet, Roomful of Teeth, Esperanza Spalding, Wayne Shorter, and Renée Fleming. The National Symphony Orchestra presented two outdoor performances, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as well as a program with Alan Menken and other Broadway celebrities.



The National Symphony Orchestra performs Beethoven (with an aerial view of the REACH on the screen)

The Washington National Opera, one of the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra's two employers, screened a 2013 performance of *Showboat* on the video wall. KCOHO and NSO musicians were also featured in chamber music performances throughout the festival.

The REACH was funded through a multi-year development effort that raised over \$250 million, with a portion of that being set aside for artistic operations. Kennedy Center Chairman David Rubenstein provided an anchor gift of \$50 million. An estimated 100,000 people attended events during the opening festival. Few specific programs and events after the opening of the REACH have been publicly announced. While some hope the Kennedy Center will be able to create novel arts experiences in the new space, there is some skepticism among arts critics. As the *Washington Post's* Philip Kennicott wrote, "If [in five years] the majority of its new spaces are active and throwing off sparks, it will be a success. If not, the problem will almost certainly be a lack of institutional foresight rather than architectural planning."

Lyric's New Leader

Spanish-born Italian conductor Enrique Mazzola has been announced as music director designate of the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Sir Andrew Davis, who is about to open his 20th season as music director, will complete his tenure at the end of the 2020/2021 season, and Mazzola will take the helm for the 2021/2022 season. Mazzola has conducted two bel canto operas at Lyric in 2016 and 2017 and is beginning an early Verdi series at Lyric this fall with *Luisa Miller*. Lyric Opera management has cited the orchestra's conductor surveys as >>

integral to their music director search.

At the all-company announcement meeting on September 12, Davis spoke movingly about his love for Lyric and his confidence that Mazzola “will continue the tradition of the Lyric Opera family.” Mazzola said he felt “amore a prima vista” for Lyric and praised the artistic forces of the company, especially “a formidable orchestra, able to play in the most virtuosic way all different repertoire, from the classical to the contemporary.” As music director, Mazzola will make Chicago his home; “I really want to listen to Chicago... I want to feel Chicago.” Luckily he already loves deep-dish pizza!

San Diego’s New Summer Venue

The San Diego Symphony announced that its new concert venue, Bayside Performance Park, will open in the summer of 2020. Construction for the \$45-million project began on September 16. The venue will function as a dual-purpose outdoor waterfront performance space and active public park, the only one of its kind on the west coast.

Bayside Performance Park will boast many features, including a covered, 13,000-square-foot stage with ancillary back-of-house facilities, and a patio at the back of the performance stage with stunning views of the bay, which will be open for public use during non-event hours. In addition, improved and environmentally sustainable landscaping, coupled with unobstructed, terraced, variable seating for 2,000 to 10,000, will enhance the overall concert experience. The stage’s acoustic design, created by Charles Salter Acoustics of San Francisco and sound designer/consultant Shawn Murphy, will feature a Meyer Constellation System, which allows for adjustable, electronically enhanced acoustics to accommodate a variety of



Courtesy of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra

An artist’s rendering of the Bayside Performance Park stage performances, including orchestral, chamber music, Broadway musicals, and popular genres and artists. Furthermore, the San Diego Symphony will offer some reduced-price tickets to every concert and present free educational events, four free public concerts, and open SDSO rehearsals to ensure that everyone in the community has access to Bayside Performance Park events.

Said San Diego Symphony CEO Martha Gilmer, “We are elated to bring the most iconic waterfront concert venue on the west coast. The high artistic quality of our orchestra will now be supported by an equally superior performance venue. The San Diego Symphony looks forward to sharing and celebrating our gift to the community for decades to come.”



Advancing Diversity (continued)

audiences and communities. It suggests that musicians can only be valuable for their playing and that their playing can only be understood separately from their personhood.

Musicians can increase their value, both real and perceived, to the organization and audiences by taking the time to articulate their values to themselves and prospective colleagues.

Make Auditions Air-Tight To Implicit Bias

Cognitive bias is inherent to how humans perceive the world. Our brains take shortcuts to process the deluge of stimuli we encounter in every moment. This process evolved over thousands of years, and it affects us all. Think you’re immune? Take a few minutes to learn about the McGurk Effect (*Note: see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-IN8vWm3m0>*), a perceptual phenomenon that proves what we hear is inescapably influenced by what we see.

When it comes to auditions, ensure that the process yields an unbiased assessment of a candidate’s performance qualifications as measured against other candidates. We believe the following procedural factors will help orchestras mitigate the effects of cognitive bias.

Screen every round

This concept is becoming more recognized as a best practice. Last year, the delegates and officers to the 2018 International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM) passed a resolution encouraging “all orchestras to adopt an audition process that retains screens throughout every individual round of the audition.” Musicians should take this concept even further by screening chamber music and ensemble rounds.

No discussion of specific candidates during the audition

Discussing specific candidates opens the door to implicit bias and organizational politics. Audition committees should feel free to discuss the process in general before hearing candidates. For example, members of the committee who play the same instrument may wish to share insights into why a particular excerpt is included on the audition list. The committee might discuss and collectively affirm their aesthetic philosophies. But once the playing starts, the conversations should stop.

No trial weeks

The rationale for trial weeks is sensible: musicians want to see how a new colleague will fit in with the ensemble. However, this is precisely why trial weeks inhibit inclusion. The focus shifts from “musical ability” to “fitting in.” Focusing on “fitting in” opens the door to a host of social and cognitive biases.

A trial week becomes a referendum on how quickly and effectively the candidate adapts to and navigates ensemble norms rather than a measure of how the candidate played relative to other candidates.

Trial weeks create an out-group of one. This dynamic affects the candidate’s performance and the committee’s assessment. Not only does this magnify biases, it also dilutes focus on the music. It does not serve the music to lend one ear to evaluating >>

a prospective colleague and another ear toward collaboration.

Moreover, in our experience, trial weeks are often offered in bad faith as a superficially logical way to decline candidates who have otherwise already distinguished themselves.

No failed searches (i.e. “no-hire” audition results)

Commit to offering the job to the candidate who receives the most votes in the audition process. In academia, failed searches occur frequently. Usually, they are the result of organizational politics – an impasse between members of a search committee. In orchestras, “no-hire” audition results happen for nominally defensible reasons: “No candidate played well enough” or “no candidate was a good fit.”

While there can be valid reasons to fail a search, it’s unfair to candidates to move the goal posts or change the criteria for success midstream. Moreover, given that the orchestral employment landscape shifts audition costs onto musicians, it borders on unethical when a search process results in a no-hire.

Eliminate conflicts of interest on the committee

Conflicts of interest are related to failed searches. The following musicians should be ineligible to serve on an audition or tenure review committee:

- Musicians who could play interim appointments if the search resulted in a no-hire.
- Musicians who could be offered the permanent position in the event of a no-hire.
- Musicians who could financially benefit—for example, they have a spouse who could play as a substitute in the interim.

Unfortunately, we have observed each of those scenarios on orchestral audition committees. In searches for principal positions, these scenarios can be tricky to navigate. While assistant and associate principals can step in to play, they should not serve on the audition committee when they do so.

The Tenure Process: Evaluate *And* Invest

Get the most out of every new colleague by fostering a supportive and inclusive environment with sincere and constructive feedback.

Shift your mindset. You are not adding a new musician to an existing group. You are forming a new group that includes a new musician as a member. Welcoming a new player is an opportunity to renew and reinvent an inclusive culture. When a player is denied tenure, the organization has failed, not the musician. Your colleague’s success and growth through the process is ultimately an investment in the artistic vitality of your ensemble.

Require all committee members to attend workshops about implicit bias and group dynamics. Before going about the business of evaluating others, musicians should first make sure they understand the subconscious elements that will inform their decision and evaluation processes.

No anonymous feedback. Feedback should be transparent, and the candidate should be in the room when being discussed, instead of just being told the results of a discussion. If members of the committee cannot comfortably share candidate feedback with the candidate in the room, that’s a good sign that the feedback is not candid or constructive.

Make feedback bi-directional. The tenure review commit-

tee invests a lot of energy into what it needs from the candidate. Consider what the candidate needs from the orchestra. Ask yourselves and the candidate: Are we investing in this musician’s growth and making them comfortable enough to contribute value to the orchestra? As colleagues, your stated goal should be to support new colleagues successfully through tenure.

Musicians Must Take The Lead


Funders recognize that musicians must lead the march towards greater inclusion. Musicians should confidently and directly propose musician-driven and musician-centered initiatives.

There are many places to start. Here are a few ideas:

Conduct an inclusion survey. Survey your membership. Where are the hidden barriers to inclusion?

Invest in professional development. Enhance your skills and knowledge around other things that will improve your workplace.

Attend a diversity conference. There are many conferences focused on inclusion. Not planning to attend the League of American Orchestras Conference this year in Nashville? Check out the 23rd Annual Diversity and Inclusion Conference being held the same day in Brooklyn. Musicians can learn from leaders in other fields, and leaders in different fields are eager to learn from musicians!

Leading inclusion does more than create pathways for more diverse groups of capable musicians. It provides a context for musicians to think deeply about what they value and to invest in skills and processes that make orchestras a better place to work and perform. 

Note: This article first appeared in the June 2019 issue of Allegro, the magazine of the NYC musicians’ union (AFM Local 802), and is reprinted with permission. For more background, see www.Local802afm.org/allegro. Shea Scruggs, a former professional oboist, is a strategic initiatives consultant who works closely with senior leadership teams to build mission-driven and data-driven projects. MET Orchestra trombonist Weston Sprott is an active educator and advocate/consultant for diversity and inclusion efforts in classical music. Contact them at: shea.d.scruggs@gmail.com or weston.sprott@gmail.com.

What a Long Strange Trip (*continued*)

and sisters from so many other unions, including the teachers and nurses unions, AGMA, IBEW, UFCW, AFSCME, IATSE, and too many more to name, as well as a host of community supporters and our very own Save Our BSO group. One of the local amateur musicians who played in our BSO Academy started a GoFundMe Campaign to supply us with meals while we marched. We eventually started our own GoFundMe Campaign, which has now raised nearly \$84,000.

We are grateful to the musicians of ICSOM orchestras around the country for their collective and individual contributions to our cause, both financially through the Call to Action and personally through their presence on our picket line and working with us in our self-produced concerts. We thank >>

ICSOM leadership for the active role it has played, issuing the Call to Action, sending letters and opinion pieces from Meredith Snow and Paul Austin to the editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, and offering behind-the-scenes assistance. We thank Paul Austin, Peter de Boor, and former chair Bruce Ridge for traveling to Baltimore to join us on the picket line. We've learned so much about what it means to be there for others by observing how others showed up for us this summer, and how we showed up for each other.

There were times I couldn't be on the picket line because I had to be on my computer writing press releases or talking to reporters. Even on those days when I was at the picket line, I was busy on my phone or talking to a reporter. But I never had to worry about whether there would be a picket line or if our message was getting out, because I knew my colleagues would be there. They showed up every day and in every way we needed to, and Baltimore showed up for us in response.

Not only did our supporters show up on our picket line, they showed up with money to strengthen us and ultimately to get

us back on the stage. A generous group of donors emerged that offered over \$1 million to help put us back on the stage. And on Friday, September 20, at 11:30 p.m., we managed to come to a one-year agreement with BSO management. Because

of these generous donors, we were able to hold our ground against salary concessions. We also agreed on a "Vision Committee" that will allow the musicians and all of the stakeholders of the organization—including these donors—to be more involved in the decision making processes, including determining the season length. In an unconventional format, we agreed to a shorter schedule of 40 working weeks for the remainder of the 19–20 season, which will include two weeks of summer programming. Management agreed to fund our regular weekly salary throughout the summer non-performance weeks. And although we will take the stage on

Friday, September 27, to thunderous applause, we know that this is not the end. It's only the beginning of the fight to preserve what has been built here over the last 104 years. Please stay with us as we fight on to #SaveOurBSO.

Note: The author is co-chair of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Players' Committee.



SOMA conference participants showing their support for the BSO musicians (Note: see "Antipodean Advocacy" on page 6)

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